

## **Training Module #2:**



# **Managing Your Workload**

# Introduction

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This print module was produced by the Michigan Judicial Institute (MJl) specifically for Michigan Court Support Personnel.

The intent of this print module is to provide staff with information on the following topics:

- ❖ Workload statistics and perspectives,
- ❖ Individual work styles and practices, and
- ❖ Managing workload effectively.

The information is presented in a quick-read format and is intended to serve as a tool for learning, reflection, and dialogue.

This print module may be used as a stand-alone training tool or incorporated into a facilitated training session.

For inquiries on this or other available Michigan Judicial Institute training resources, contact MJl at (517) 373–7171.

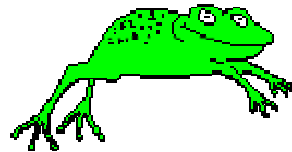
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# **“Time management is not a practice but an attitude.”**

—Steve Fredericks/Digital Domain, Inc.

“I try to do one day at a time, but sometimes several days attack me at once.”

Ashleigh Brilliant



“You won’t catch a frog if you’re afraid to get your shorts wet!”

Cynthia Copeland Lewis

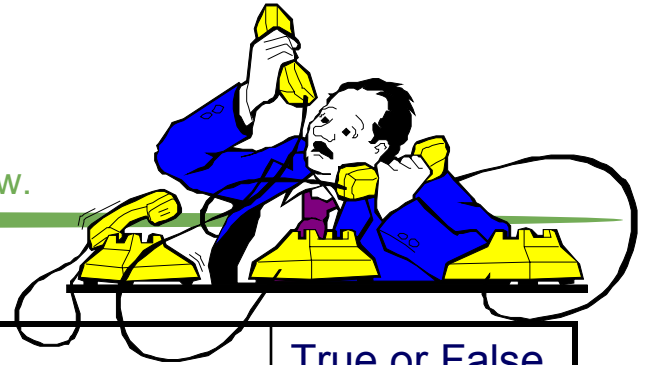
“Yesterday’s gone on down the river and you can’t get it back... no matter what.”

Larry McMurtry

“A person who has not done one-half of his day’s work by ten o’clock runs a chance of leaving the other half undone.” Emily Bronte

# Workload Statistics— True or False?

Answers provided below.



1.	Information overload is the epidemic of the 1990s.	True or False
2.	Most employees have 36 hours' worth of paperwork stacked on their desks with only 99 minutes, on average, to handle it.	True or False
3.	Approximately 1.6 trillion pieces of paper circulate through U.S. offices every year.	True or False
4.	Fifteen billion faxes are sent each year from U.S. fax machines.	True or False
5.	Roughly 1.2 billion electronic mail messages are sent every year, up 3,000% in ten years.	True or False
6.	Each office worker in the U.S. generates 45 pages of new paper daily.	True or False
7.	Fighting fires (solving problems) has become one of the leading causes of lost time in the workplace.	True or False

The answer to all the questions is "True." You probably handle an ocean of information coming at you from various sources simultaneously. If it's any comfort, you are not alone.

Source: Soundview Executive Book Summaries—"How to See the Big Picture" Vol. 14, No. 10, Oct. 1992

# Workplace Myths?



## **MYTH #1—“Concentrate only on information relevant to your job!”**

Information is a primary source of knowledge and knowledge is more useful if you understand the big picture. Learn all you can! The more skills and knowledge you acquire, the more valuable you are to your organization.

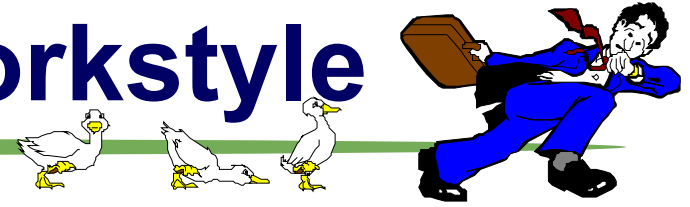
**MYTH #2—“Don’t waste time with unimportant people.”** People who may seem unimportant at the moment may be just the people you will need in the future. It pays to set aside time to brainstorm ideas and talk with people about your work. Seeking other perspectives will help you build a better product, and communicating with others will help build a foundation to support your efforts.

**MYTH #3 —“Carefully plan and schedule your day.”** Try to schedule some flexibility into your day so that you can handle problems and opportunities as they arise without compromising your productivity.

**DO YOU KNOW?  
Which day of the  
week is most  
productive?**

According to Accountemps,  
U.S. executives rank  
Tuesday (51%) as the most  
productive for employees.

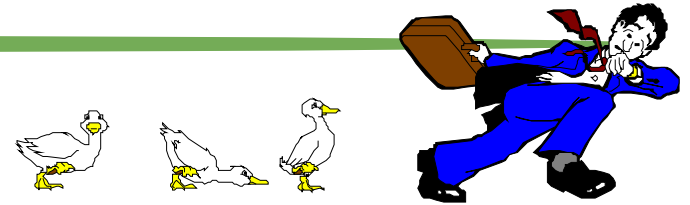
# “Ducks in a Row” Workstyle



If your workstyle is such that you...

- ❖ do one thing at a time.
- ❖ concentrate only on the job at hand.
- ❖ adhere religiously to plans.
- ❖ are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration.
- ❖ show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend.
- ❖ emphasize promptness.

# Help Yourself & Those Around You



Keeping an ongoing dialogue with your co-workers if they are impacted by the tasks or project you are working on.

If you need information or materials from others, ask them if they can do so by a given date. That way you can clarify your timeline and if the date passes by without the materials, you can check back to see what the holdup may be.

Adjusting the percentage of perfection required on the task. Work with your partners to redefine how “polished” the product must be.

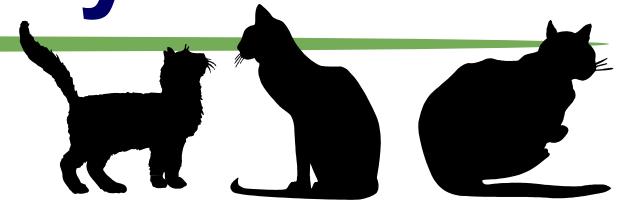
Stepping back from the intensity of your work several times a day. Totally relax and renew for a moment—sometimes slowing down momentarily will allow you to move ahead faster.

Scheduling some breathing room for yourself. This will allow you some “wiggle room” if an unforeseen hurdle arises.

SOURCE: MJJ seminar “*Coping with Multiple Priorities*” by Bev Nemecek.

# “Herding Cats” Workstyle

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If your workstyle is such that you ...

- ❖ do many things at once
- ❖ are easily distracted and subject to interruptions
- ❖ consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible
- ❖ change plans easily and often
- ❖ are more concerned with the comfort of others than with privacy



# Help Yourself & Those Around You



Keeping distractions to a minimum. Accomplishing this can often be challenging! Sometimes it can be as simple as laying out your workspace so that you are not distracted by movement in your doorway. Other times may require more innovative ideas such as a sign on your door: “Great mind under duress! DO NOT DISTURB for your own safety!”

Keeping supervisors informed on how the project or task is moving along. Seeing you work on multiple tasks may cause others to believe you are not attending to tasks as needed.

Keeping coworkers informed of changes in plans or timelines well ahead of deadlines.

Making notes as to your progress so others who may need to access information in your absence, know where you are in the process.

Not overlooking the possibility that others may hold key content as well. Create opportunities for others to contribute.

SOURCE: MJI seminar “*Coping with Multiple Priorities*” by Bev Nemecek.

# The “Perfect Workplace” Calendar

MISC	NEG	FRI	FRI	FRI	THUR	WED	TUES
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
	22	21	20	19	18	17	16
	29	28	27	26	25	24	23
	36	35	34	33	32	31	30

- ❖ With this calendar, a job or project can be requested on the 7th and delivered on the 3rd.
- ❖ For those organizations who set Friday deadlines, there are three Fridays in every week. This is especially beneficial for those individuals who are paid on Fridays.
- ❖ There are 5 miscellaneous days added to each month to allow for month-end panic jobs.
- ❖ There is no 1st of the month thus avoiding late delivery of previous month's last-minute panic jobs.
- ❖ Monday blues are abolished since there are no Mondays on the calendar.
- ❖ A new day, “Negotiation Day”, has been introduced keeping the other days free for uninterrupted panic.



SOURCE: Based on materials from “*Professional Business Operations*,” Pensacola, Florida  
[www.sorganized.com](http://www.sorganized.com)

# Work Is a Juggling Act



To maintain workplace balance we need to adhere to:

- ❖ Compliance to boss
- ❖ Conformity to system
- ❖ Personal need for meaning and innovation

**The key is to see the need to juggle all three!**

**Find time to reshape your work.** Find ways to make it more efficient, more effective, and more meaningful whenever possible. Sometime it requires getting together with others in your office. Usually it requires initiative and persistence, but the result of improved job satisfaction and lowered stress in the long run is worth it.

# Work Is a Juggling Act

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In order to juggle well you must:

1. First prioritize your tasks by needed deadline or order of importance. This requires planning. Research indicates that for every minute you spend planning, you save four minutes later. Build planning into your schedule—make it a habit. The last half hour of each day should be set aside to plan for the next day. Remember that half hour today will save you two hours tomorrow!
2. Organize around those tasks you have listed as priorities (1-5 priorities each day). How much time do you need for each task? What resources will you need to accomplish that task? Who will you need to talk with to find out the answers? Remember your goals, list your tasks, schedule the time required.
3. Stay with your organized plan of action. Let your supervisor know what your goals are for the day. That way he/she will know how additional tasks directed your way will impact the day's outcome.



# Quick Tips

## **CHICKEN POX METHOD**

To avoid drowning in a sea of documents, try the chicken pox method of paper management: Put a dot on a document each time you handle it. Then if you get to a point where it has more than 3 dots it's time to act on it and get it off your desk.

(SOURCE: Working Woman, [800] 234-9675)

## **EAT THE FROG FIRST THING!**

Tackle that overwhelming task first. The POSITIVE PUSH of getting a top-priority task completed will propel you through the remainder of the day.

(SOURCE: Tyme Management, [800] 815-2323)

## **FAX BACK**

Write the number you're faxing to on the back of the last page on the materials you're faxing. That way, you can see the number as you enter it on the keypad.

## **GO LEFT IF YOU'RE RIGHT**

Place your phone, notepad, pencil, and stapler on the left side of your desk if you're right-handed. Left-handers should place them on the right. This may seem awkward but you'll soon notice that you've eliminated the usual phone juggling that happens while you search for your pad and pencil and then switch to write a message.

(SOURCE: Chicago Tribune)

## **TICKET OUT THE DOOR**

Before quitting for the day, write yourself a few notes on where you go next. This will make it much easier when you pick up the effort again.

## **MOLDY FILES**

You don't put fresh groceries in the refrigerator when you've got moldy food in there already. The same goes for your files! Clean out what you don't need. Most people only need 20% of what they have filed in their office.

(SOURCE: SMEAD Co. [www.smead.com](http://www.smead.com))

## **E-DIAL**

Assume you'll get a voice mail every time you make a phone call. That way, you'll be ready to deliver that clear, detailed message.

(SOURCE: Home Office Computing)

# Toning Telephone Skills

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1. When there's a backlog on your voice mail, \_\_\_\_\_ the messages and delete them from your answering machine immediately. You won't have to listen to "old" messages each time you want to check your "new" ones.
2. To avoid phone tag, try to \_\_\_\_\_ when you leave voice mail. Leave a time when you can be reached or when you'll call again.
3. To grab the attention of someone who doesn't return calls, \_\_\_\_\_ a message! They usually get read quickly.
4. To speed up a phone call, begin by saying "I \_\_\_\_\_, but I have a quick question." It's a polite way of saying, "I'm busy too!"
5. Time management experts recommend setting aside one hour a day to make and return phone calls. The best times of the day to do this are

**1. write down 2. set an appointment 3. fax 4. know you're busy 5. first and last two hours of the day**

SOURCE: *Fast Company* magazine.

# The Wise Filer

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Well organized files can help you see the big picture. Try these tips.

**FILE REGULARLY!** It's like eating an elephant. If you tackle the task in small "bites" and regularly, you can keep up with the load. Letting it go only makes the task continually grow larger until it is out of control.

**FILE AT THE END OF EACH DAY.** When you are cleaning off your desk, file the items in the appropriate file location.

## **DIVIDE YOUR FILES INTO THREE TYPES:**

- ❖ Working Files which you access at least once a week. Keep these files close at hand.
- ❖ Reference Files - those you access only once a month.
- ❖ Archive files - those you access once a year.

**Use a TICKLER FILE** to remind you of tasks to be done or upcoming events. A Tickler File consists of one file for each month of the year and 1 set of files numbered 1 through 31 (each day of the month). The day files go into the month you are in. File "things to do" OR upcoming event announcements in the appropriate month.

Use **ONE OR TWO WORD LABELS** on your file folders. Usually the best arrangement is by category.

**ATTACH TABS** to the front flap of your folders. Put main categories on the left side, subheads in the middle, and individual categories on the right.

**HOLD FILE** - If you're not sure where to file an item, put it in a "HOLD FILE." After a week has passed, you might better understand how to categorize the item.

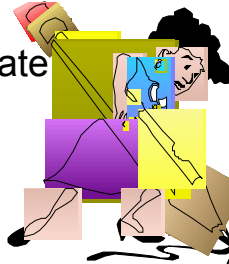
**COLOR KEY** folders. Use yellow or other brightly colored folders to hold important accounts or rush jobs or confidential material.

**BOOKMARK** - If you remove a document from a file for only a few moments, turn the file sideways to "bookmark" where the document goes.



# Where Would You File It?

(Draw a line from each numbered document on the right to the appropriate type of file on the left. #1 has been completed as an example)



- ❖ Monthly Tickler File (monthly reminder)
- ❖ Daily Tickler File (daily reminder)
- ❖ Working File (reference once a week)
- ❖ Reference File (reference once a month)
- ❖ Archive File (reference once a year)
- ❖ Hold File (on hold until I figure out where it goes!)

- ❖ Request for confidential information by a customer
- ❖ Note reminding you to call a constituent back the next day
- ❖ New mileage reimbursement forms for employee travel
- ❖ Weekly time sheets to access for completion
- ❖ Yearly budget layout
- ❖ Reminder memo for a staff meeting next month.

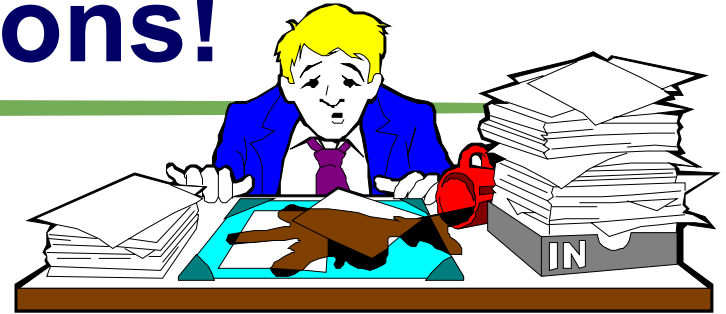
ANSWERS: 1. Hold file 2. Daily Tickler 3. Reference File  
4. Working File 5. Archive file 6. Monthly Tickler



# Oh, Those Interruptions!

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The five deadliest words in any office today are “Do you have a minute?” Everyone’s a culprit, even yourself! We are all guilty of interrupting a co-worker if we have a need that we feel needs immediate attention.



The Center for Creative Leadership did a study that shows the average worker is interrupted every 5-20 minutes, so ... how do we minimize those moments?

Interruptions can be reduced dramatically if individuals and teams agree to keep interruptions to a minimum and work together to make modifications in their work processes. Just talking about it with your co-workers will build awareness.

# Your Workday Priorities

Think about your typical workday. List a dozen or so of your most time-consuming activities. Then put each numbered item from your list into the appropriate box below. If they are “important and urgent”, put the item in box “A”. If the item is “Important / Not Urgent”, it goes in box “B”, etc. Are you spending your time on the activities that are most important and urgent?

## Day's Activities List:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	#A	#B
NOT IMPORTANT	#C	#D



SOURCE: *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey, 1989.

# Oh, Those Interruptions!

## **CAN I ASK YOU A FAVOR?**

Keep a tablet on your desk with the day's top priorities listed on it. If a co-worker or your boss presents a request for additional material, add the request to the **BOTTOM** of your list. (Unless, of course, your boss indicates it's a priority!) Respond to the request by saying, "My workload does not allow me to take on any additional tasks right now. I will add it to my 'to do' list, however, and I should be able to get it to you by \_\_\_\_\_".

**THE TALKER!** Sometimes people stop in to visit at the most inconvenient times. You don't want to be rude **BUT** you have work to do, right? You may want to respond by saying, "(Name), I'd really like to talk to you about this, but I am really feeling overwhelmed with work right now. Can we schedule lunch together or a time when I'm not so busy to discuss this? Thanks."

**INTEROFFICE E-MAIL?** If you do have e-mail, make a conscious effort to use e-mail to communicate with co-workers. E-mail captures the request and allows response without interruption. Make sure you indicate how soon you need a response as well.

**WOULD YOU BE WILLING?** Sometimes our work load does allow us to provide assistance for another co-worker who may be in a time crunch! Remember, all relationships are give and take! If you are never willing to help another, you will not find help when you are in need.

**IF YOU'RE ON THE TELEPHONE** "I know you're very busy so I won't keep you any longer. Thanks, and have a good day!"

# Learning Is a Process

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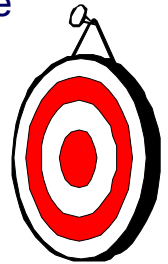
Just as it has taken you time to gain the knowledge you need to be good at your job, it will also take time to embrace and practice an attitude of good time management and strong organizational skills.

Stretch yourself and your abilities. As Pat Summit, Head Coach of the University of Tennessee Women's Basketball Program, says, "A...game never goes the way you envision... so you have to learn quickly from your mistakes and change your approach accordingly." Approach your time management and organizational skills the same way.

If you've had a "bad" day, don't think of it as a failure but rather a process for learning—an opportunity that allows you to grow. Reflect on the day and think about the following:

1. What were the challenges of the day?
2. Were the challenges something I had control over?
3. Could I have organized differently to prevent those challenges that confronted me?

Success has little to do with how much was left undone at the end of the day, but rather what was actually accomplished. By attacking that "To Do" list of priorities, taking action, and learning from your failure, you will find you are getting more done in less time with less stress. (And that is a good thing!)



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**“It is something to paint a picture or to carve a statue and so to make a few objects beautiful. But it is far more glorious to carve and paint the atmosphere in which we work to affect the quality of the day.”**

Henry David Thoreau